



# TOWN OF GROTON

## PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

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March 14, 2016

Government Administration and Elections Committee  
Hartford, CT 06106-7106

Dear Senators, Representatives and members of the Government Administration and Elections Committee:

SUBJECT: HB 5619 for the Transfer of State owned land at Mystic Oral School to the Town of Groton

The Town of Groton is pleased to provide testimony in support of HB 5619 titled "An Act Conveying Certain Parcels of State Land and Requiring a Study of Certain Real Property." Specifically, we support Section 8 as it relates to land surrounding the former Mystic Oral School in the Town of Groton. This bill will transfer a certain portion of land currently held in ownership by the State of Connecticut to the Town of Groton. The land in question is currently under the stewardship of the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP).

The Town of Groton wishes to acquire this land for the purposes of utilizing a majority of the property for active or passive recreation and open space, and to combine a portion of the property with the Mystic Oral School property. That property is held under the stewardship of the DECD for future development. The subject property of discussion held by DEEP is a real estate asset that can have significant positive impacts on the key reinvestment of the Mystic Oral School and address some recreational needs of the town. The Town of Groton desires for the Mystic Oral School to be redeveloped offering both local and state economic benefits. This site has been underutilized since the school closed in 1980, and has been mostly vacant for over five years. These buildings and the property, on a smaller scale, are degrading into our own Norwich Hospital.

The Town of Groton is currently working with the State Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD) for the town to assist or take the lead in the marketing of the Mystic Oral School property. The property holds about 48 acres and approximately 150,000 square feet in building area. Groton is hopeful that this effort will be possible through the utilization of the State of Connecticut Brownfields program.

In our draft Plan of Conservation and Development, the redevelopment of the Mystic Oral School is a high priority. This key piece of real estate, currently not on the tax rolls, has not been redeveloped, and the limitation of land area is a factor in limiting its redevelopment potential. The Town of Groton recently paid for and completed a Market Analysis indicating this large property is

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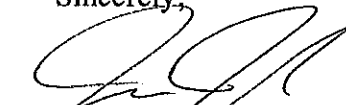
an opportunity area and the Town of Groton should work with the state to see the property redeveloped. In addition, Groton recently completed a feasibility analysis for the Mystic Oral School property which describes several different redevelopment scenarios and factors limiting the site's redevelopment. One such factor included enlarging the developable area of this site which is consistent with our local planning needs and goals. Approval of this transfer will enable Groton to further implement redevelopment and environmental improvements to an identified area of need while also meeting the state identified goal of redeveloping their Mystic Oral School property.

The state changed the stewardship of a large portion of the Mystic Oral School property in 2010, thus reducing the area for redevelopment by approximately 68 acres. This division limits the potential future development area for the Oral School property. It is the Town of Groton's desire to gain ownership of all or a large portion of this property in order to improve opportunities for development of the site. The Office of Planning and Development (OPDS) staff reviewed maps and the files on the Mystic Oral School and found approximately 10 acres of land adjacent to the existing buildings and infrastructure on the site that should be investigated further for its development potential with the reuse of the Mystic Oral School.

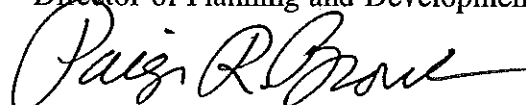
If the Town were to gain ownership of this land, we would work with environmental and engineering professionals to develop some recreation, open space, and development opportunities for the entire property. These may include active and passive recreation development and a number of redevelopment options for the developed portion of the Mystic Oral School. Acquiring this property would increase the size of the Mystic Oral School property from a development capacity standpoint. This is true even if only a small portion of the property was slated for development. Additionally, the acquisition would better provide access to the water which is a significant variable in marketing the project. If the Oral School, and a portion of this property under discussion today, is sold to a private party, that land would add to the Town of Groton grand list. Groton would still be able to protect the natural resources portion of the property with a perpetual conservation easement and we would retain municipal ownership of any of the environmentally sensitive land for open space protection. Transferring the ownership of the portion of property held in stewardship by DEEP to the Town of Groton will be a major step in making the property more marketable for economic development purposes and still allow for preservation of forested lands and sensitive resources and habitat along the Mystic River.

If you should have any questions, please contact us at [jreiner@groton-ct.gov](mailto:jreiner@groton-ct.gov), (860) 446-5980 or [pbronk@groton-ct.gov](mailto:pbronk@groton-ct.gov), (860) 448-4095.

Sincerely,



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